

AURORA FORUM AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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ESALEN: EDUCATION FOR LIFE ON THE EDGE

MICHAEL MURPHY, JEFFREY KRIPAL
AND MARK GONNERMAN (MODERATOR)

Mark Gonnerman: Good evening, and welcome to the Aurora Forum at Stanford University. I'm Mark Gonnerman, the Forum's director, and I thank all of you for taking time out from your busy schedules to join us here for a conversation we're calling "Esalen: Education for Life on the Edge" with Esalen co-founder Michael Murphy and historian Jeffrey Kripal. I'll introduce both of them in more detail a bit later, but first I want to talk about our format for tonight and set the stage.

You've noticed that there's a film crew here. Our presentation tonight is being filmed by VisionAire Media, Incorporated because they're working on a documentary based on Jeff Kripal's book about Esalen. The film crew will occasionally turn the cameras on you, the audience, to film reaction to our conversation. If this is not acceptable to you and you wish not to be filmed, please make that clear to any cameraperson who focuses on you (just wave them off), or you can move to a section in the back where there will be no filming. But we do like to have a spirit of everyone feeling included at the Aurora Forum, and I hope you'll enjoy and appreciate this extra dimension of our evening here tonight.

I'm really honored to be here on the stage with Michael Murphy and Jeffrey Kripal. Michael Murphy, as you know, is the co-founder and the chairman of the board of Esalen Institute and the executive director of the Esalen Center for Theory and Research. He has written four novels, including *Golf in the Kingdom*, and has done, as we will hear as the conversation unfolds tonight, a great deal of research on extraordinary aspects of human beings, especially in relation to athletic endeavors.

Jeffrey Kripal has written a history of Esalen called *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*, which was published by The University of Chicago Press just this year. He is the J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University and the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, and he has in his career already a distinguished record of scholarship and publication in South Asian religions. Now he is turning his gaze on the history of American religions.

Michael Murphy was born in Salinas, California, in 1930, and Jeffrey was born in Hebron, Nebraska, in 1962, the same year that Esalen was founded. But I'd like to begin our conversation tonight in the year 1950, when Michael Murphy was an undergraduate here at Stanford and came into this very auditorium and quite by chance heard a lecture by a teacher we're here to honor tonight, Frederic Spiegelberg. And I can think of no better place to begin, Mike, than with you talking about that experience in this place in 1950.

Michael Murphy Mark, first I want to just say thank you. I can't tell you how touched I was when you put this talk here in Cubberley because it was certainly the most fateful single encounter of my life. I can remember exactly where I was sitting; I can see somebody up there. I was here for Dr. Farnsworth's social psychology class, but there was a buzz all over campus about Spiegelberg. This was the second day of classes in April 1950. The word had gotten out that something electrifying had happened in the first lecture, but there were different stories about exactly what it was that had happened, so that was interesting. Anyway, I had heard a lot about him. I said, Well, I'm going to sit here. But I sat next to the door up there, so it's just like déjà vu all over again. Did anyone here ever encounter Spiegelberg? Well, this is interesting—seven or eight people. Well, let me just see if I can capture a little bit of what he was like. Here I was, nineteen and sitting up there having heard about him, and he was late entering from that side of the stage. Frederic was never afraid of the silence. I remember there was a guy sitting in front of me who was beginning to doze off distinctly up in the corner up there. Anyway, Frederic came on stage and stood there and let the silence happen. Now, my recollection is that he then said, "Brahman," and the guy sitting in front of me with a clipboard threw the clipboard up like this [gestures], and it was electrifying. Then he let the silence gather again and he lectured on the Vedic hymns. It was a course in comparative religious studies.

Walking back to the fraternity after this, a sentence just started going through my mind: "I'm never going to be the same again." The first thing I did was quit my social psychology class and enroll in this class. This led eventually to a big change: dropping out of pre-med, and so forth. I just think it would be appropriate to frame this with another anecdote. Some years later, after I and a group of students here had completely entered into the world that he was dramatizing through religious studies, I met with Dean Balch, who was the dean of men, and he said, "You know, there are a number of parents here and faculty who are trying to get rid of Spiegelberg." And I was surprised ... also because he confided this. I asked why and he said, "Well, you know why." He said, "Most parents, and virtually all the faculty, want students to be interested in these things, but not excited." [Laughter]

Gonnerman And you were genuinely excited.

Murphy Yeah, and my father said he was going to do something about Dr. Spiegelberg. Later, my father became Esalen's greatest supporter, but he was angry because a lot of us were dropping out, etcetera. So anyway, that's what happened that day, and this is the first time I've been back here in 58 years, so thank you very much. [Applause]

Gonnerman Actually, we would hope that this is not an unusual experience for a young person at a university to have this kind of life-changing, earth-shattering encounter. It seems that that's something that ought to be happening in universities. You're a university professor, Jeff. Is this something that's typically happening with students?

Kripal: I would hope so. Mike and I have had this conversation many, many times about what happened here 58 years ago, and I think that what originally drew me to his story so much was that it's essentially a conversion experience that occurred not in a forest somewhere or a monastery or a church, but in a university lecture hall. I happen to believe that our universities and our colleges are our culture's most sophisticated

initiation ritual. It's really where initiation takes place in our culture, and I think Mike's experience here with Frederic that day is a perfect example of this. I do think it continues to happen. We don't really know where the young Michael Murphys are right now because they're still young and they're still out there finding their way, but I meet them all the time in classrooms and my hope is that absolutely it's still happening.

Gonnerman: It's interesting that you took the religion of *no* religion—an idea, a line from Spiegelberg—as the subtitle of your book. What's that about: the religion of no religion?

Murphy: Well, it's edgy, it's sufficiently catchy, but it's also based on a very powerful mystical experience that Frederic had as a young man in 1917 in Holland. He was studying mystical theology in Latin and was studying probably for the ministry or to become a theologian. And he was walking in a wheat field one day, and as he walked in the wheat field, he described this opening in which everything became alive. And he talked about a supercosmic sun that just started to shine through the birds and the weeds and the sky. He basically had what we call a natural mystical experience, where divinity is experienced in the world and in nature as opposed to something separate from it. As he continued then after this sort of shattering experience, he came upon a little gray church, which horrified him, and it horrified him because he couldn't figure out how you could take this cosmic consciousness that he had just entered and put it in a building and capture it in a set of dogmas or a set of teachings. And I think that stuck with him for the rest of his life, and I think that's what he communicated in this auditorium to this class, remember, on *comparative* religion. Comparative religion was so dear to Frederic because he taught it from the spirit of the religion of no religion—that the divine speaks through the different religious traditions but it's captured by none of them. I think that's the power of what he was doing and I think that's what filtered into Esalen then and the kinds of thinkers and movements that flowed through there for all these years.

Gonnerman: Actually, he was quite a pioneer in the comparative study of religion, having published in 1939 something called *The Bible of the World*, a compendium of world scriptures. Was that part of the course—that *Bible of the World*?

Murphy: Yes, that was the assigned text, and that was indeed our initiation into a world view that I just didn't get in the Episcopal Church in Salinas growing up. And the minute I heard "Brahman," it was tough competition for the Virgin Mary for me. [Laughter] And it was not just the word, it was what he conveyed and then so graphically told us about, for example, two great Indian gurus he had met the previous year in his travels to India: Ramana Maharshi, who maybe some of you know—the great Indian teacher. Spiegelberg would say that people would come from the end of the world just to sit and watch him reach the newspaper because he didn't speak much, but the transmission was so powerful, and Ramana Maharshi had been the model for *The Razor's Edge*. Somerset Maugham had met him. To reveal my age, I had seen Tyrone Power in *The Razor's Edge*; that was 1948. Anyway, he talked about Ramana Maharshi and made him very close, and then Sri Aurobindo, the great Indian independence leader who, it turns out, has had the greatest influence on me, but he has an evolutionary vision in which is embedded the whole mystical traditions. But in any case, Spiegelberg was making one perspective after another—vivid, brilliant stuff on Tibetan Buddhism and marvelous stuff on Rumi

and Sufism. I had never heard of Sufism at nineteen. Then he was wonderful with the Christian mystics. But this was all there in those three mountains, and it was intoxicating. But it made it awfully difficult for some of us to get confined to the small church of this or that thought. But he was not deconstructive. Comparativism can open you up and fill you with appreciation of the particular traditions. I would say his great genius was to open you up and yet deepen appreciation, and that was stamped into the DNA of Esalen because both Dick Price, who started Esalen with me, and I had been touched originally by Spiegelberg at Stanford.

Gonnerman: There's the sense, then, of having an open mind—being in the mode of exploration. Is that something that he demonstrated?

Murphy: Right. It's one of the great, let's call it, I would say, struggles and efforts in the whole history of Esalen to join the passion of transformative practice, even if it's only for a weekend, but certainly over a course of time ... to join that with an open intellect. You know, there's a powerful tendency for these two to come into conflict; how to stay open in a modern sense. Jeff, who is writing the most ambitious history and the best book about Esalen that's been written by far, really highlighted this dynamic at Esalen, which has not always been easy. But Spiegelberg would salt his lectures with very ... not damning critiques, but remarks against the fundamentalisms and against the claiming too much of certain dogmas. At the same time, you have this great appreciation, and in that he drew on the great mystics, who are already saying *neti, neti* (no, no) to this as well as yes, yes. So he was conveying that mentality and that was my original initiation that then fed into our attempts to recreate that at Esalen as a meeting place of different ways of growth and ways of understanding without capturing the flag, as we called it.

Gonnerman: Let's talk in just a minute about the founding of Esalen, but I'm curious: Did Spiegelberg encourage you to go to India?

Murphy: No.

Gonnerman: How did you end up going to India?

Murphy: You know, he and I in that period, went apart. There was a group of us who were meeting around a very charismatic graduate student who was here, Walt Page, and this was a tremendous reinforcement for us because we were all—a group of us—slowly dropping out of what we thought we were going to do at Stanford; in my case, dropping out of pre-med and becoming a doctor. So Frederic didn't know about a lot of this. I don't think he would have approved of some of it, but no, he didn't propose anything. He supported me and he supported all of us in our ventures, at least that was my experience.

Gonnerman: So you did go to India in 1956-57. What influence did that experience have on the formation of Esalen? Being at an ashram?

Murphy: Well, it was at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Spiegelberg ended that course with the teachings of Aurobindo and the Life Divine. For him, this was the way forward: to take the deepest truths, let's say, that the mystics, the sages, the great philosophers, and the traditions had into an evolutionary framework. This Aurobindo was the first, I would argue, great Indian philosopher to do that. He had been the first Indian independence leader to declare complete freedom from the British. He was, before Gandhi, just as, let's

say, Samuel Adams, who led the American Revolution in Boston before Washington and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson all came along. He was that way to the Gandhi thing and opened it up—an electrifying leader. In other words, his understanding of the world was informed by his political experience and by his education in England, and it was an embrace of East and West, and that was much in the air at Stanford in those years here, and Spiegelberg ended the course that way. In any case, the group that I was part of was centered around the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, so I ended up eventually going to his ashram. But I've said this a lot and it's in Jeff's book: it provided a tremendous support for me—for meditation practice, for reading and all this, but at the same time, it was a real vaccination against cult, because contending with the wild dogmatic claims that were starting to rise up in that ashram—fifteen hundred people there.... So I came back inspired by Aurobindo but determined not to fall into a cult. When we started Esalen, it was very much Dick Price and I taking vows: No one's going to "capture the flag" here and let this happen, and a lot of people tried.

Gonnerman: What, then, were you doing? Creating a place where people would go and what?

Murphy: Well, we barely knew what we were doing. [Laughter] I don't know if we have time to tell the story of the birth of Esalen. I'd had the idea to do something like this. This was on the family property down on the Big Sur coast. I and a friend—this was about two years before I actually did this—went to her and said, "Look, Bunny [we called my grandmother Bunny], could we take over this crazy place for this idea?" She said, "Absolutely not." She told my father, "The minute I give it to Michael, he will give it to the Hindus." [Laughter] She spelled Hindus H-i-n-d-o-o-s in the Victorian way. [Laughter] But two years later, when she had hired Hunter Thompson as the caretaker (he was then 22).... Joan Baez lived there; she was 19, unknown, and she had rented the place out to a retainer of hers who was a minister of the First Church of God of Prophecy (Assemblies of God). Maybe some of you have heard this story, but in any case, we were living there on the property at night speaking in tongues (this is the Assembly of God) and Hunter Thompson, fully armed, walking the grounds. [Laughter] And on the weekends, the hot baths became a gay scene and took over the place, and meanwhile Joan Baez was singing beautifully on the porch and we were meditating. One night, a tremendous fight broke out and the guys in the baths tried to kill Hunter Thompson, and I thought, Well, I'd better go tell Bunny what's going on, because Dick and I were down there meditating. So she said she'd let us take the place over and in those years, there was a sign when you went down to Big Sur that said, "Driving on this highway at night means you're driving at your own risk." The sheriff told us, "You guys are on your own down there because we don't send our boys down there at night." It was the Wild West.

So we started off bravely with this idea of joining heaven and earth and bringing all the traditions together, but meanwhile taming this place. But we did have some ideas, and the thing started to take on a life of its own. Everyone we invited to come, came: Arnold Toynbee and Paul Tillich. And then coincidences started to happen. Abe Maslow drove into the place one night before we had even started, and everyone was reading his book, so I took that as a sign that God was telling us to do this. So it was a combination of a set of ideas and a grand improvisation. But from the beginning, we had the idea that it was going to be a meeting place for East and West, for science and religion, for different

traditions, and for people to explore into this idea of a new world view. This was very much in the air. You know, that was very much in the air at Stanford in the early fifties. Toynbee was talking this language. It was in fashion then. It's not in fashion now in the way it was then. But this world view was emerging, and that was a primary inspiration, certainly for me and also for Dick, but it had to be backed up by transformative practice, and it was the education of not just the intellectual but of living into this. Then we went on from there.

Gonnerman: Jeff, what do you think of this founder's narrative of Esalen? You've looked into it, and you've also made a lot of interesting points about synchronicity.

Kripal: Well, just listening to Mike talk, I can't help remembering that I was in diapers sucking on a bottle when all this was happening, so it's really quick: I wasn't there. But I inhabit a generation that inherited all of this, as it were, as reverberations or as echoes to the culture. I think it's a great set of stories. I think they were trying desperately to be very honest with themselves. There were a lot of things in the culture and in their own religious pasts that clearly weren't working, and I think they were very brave to start off and start over, essentially. When I look at the early, founding pamphlets that they sent out, I see them trying to combine a lot of things in the culture that had been separated. If you look at them, you have East and West, and you have science and religion, and you have body and soul. Those are really the three things that the culture had split in various ways. If you listen to Mike's stories and you look at who they invited and what they said, they were desperately after what they called the "integral." They were trying to bring those together and not live these schizophrenic lives, and I think that's still an incredibly important message. We're not living integral lives culturally now any more than we were then, so I think it's still a message that's very relevant.

Gonnerman: It seems also in the history of Esalen there's been this ongoing effort to integrate the traditional academy with a place that's very much about exploring on the frontiers. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between, say, a Stanford and an Esalen.

Kripal: Yeah, I don't think there would have been an Esalen without a Stanford. When I first met Mike, this was sort of my bailiwick or my shtick with him. When I looked at the history, it was very apparent to me that it was driven by intellectuals who could see that there was a youth culture that was hungry for a set of ideas. And it was this wonderful symbiosis between a youth movement and an older generation of academics and intellectuals who just came together. All 40 years of the tradition, I think, are very much about that symbiosis. I think it's also really interesting to point out that the birth of comparative religion in the universities really happened in the sixties; it really didn't take off until the sixties. So the birth of Esalen and the birth of comparative religion in the universities are really, I think, two sides of the same cultural coin, and I think they're spinning off one another. And I think, certainly, if you look at the generation ahead of my own generation—the academy—particularly among Buddhologists and Hindologists—people who study Hinduism and Buddhism—they're all old hippies, frankly. And they're great scholars because of that. They came out of this gut experiential dimension and then turned it into an intellectual quest. And so I think the

study of religion really flows out of these same cultural and historical currents. I think we're trying to do very similar things.

Murphy: Would this be a good moment to talk about your second book, *Roads of Excess*? You can frame it better than I can—what you did there—because that older generation of scholars would not come out of the closet with their experiences.

Kripal: Mike's experience at the academy in the fifties was that it was very unsympathetic to what a place like Esalen wanted to do or what he wanted to do. That's not my experience at the academy today. My second book is called *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom*. Essentially what it is about is the mystical experience of scholars of mysticism. When people think of scholars, they tend to think of us as sort of eggheads locked in an ivory tower and being disconnected from our bodies and from our spirits, but if you actually get into the gut of the thing, what you realize is that it takes a certain kind of person to dedicate his or her whole life to something for which there is really very little financial or cultural reward. What I was trying to do in that book is show that actually what you have in the academy are a lot of closet mystics—a lot of closet Gnostics—who are trying to make sense of religion in a way that is not bound by the faith traditions but is certainly not simply a kind of reductionistic science, either. It's really something far more interesting and far more grounded, I think, in the heart and in the spirit. So I looked in that book that Mike's speaking of at a number of scholars and told my own story as a way of trying to put more heart back into what we do.

Gonnerman: It always surprises me that there isn't more scholarship on reading and writing and scholarly endeavor as a spiritual practice.

Kripal: Right. Well, this is of course how I approached Mike. The truth is that his conversion experience was very much a reading experience. He was reading Aurobindo; he was reading *The Life Divine*. And that book came to read him as well. It was very much a union of a reader and a "read," and Mike became the read as much as he was the reader. So that's how I approach reading, and I think that's how a lot of us approach writing—as a kind of ecstatic or spiritual practice that then takes on a life of its own outside of us.

Gonnerman: Let's talk about the relationship to the academy and the kind of laboratory, in a sense, that you were creating at Esalen. You must have been trying to discover things.

Murphy: Well, from the beginning, it was. Let's take this incident of Abraham Maslow. Driving down this road, stumbling in to this place, his first impression was that it reminded him of the Bates Motel in *Psycho*. [Laughter] There was no Esalen; this was before we'd had any plans. It was on a foggy night. And he came in, and I had bought a dozen copies of *Toward a Psychology of Being*—those of you who know his work—and everybody was reading this. And he was electrified. That's how we all met him. Now, in a way, it was archetypal to so many of the encounters. These were well-established academics who could explore things there that they weren't in school. For example, Norman O. Brown just showed up and started coming, for those of you who have read Norman O. Brown. Paul Tillich, when we invited him, had given a lecture the previous week (he was an old friend of Spiegelberg's) thundering against psychedelics. The

seminar started on Friday night. On Saturday night, he said, “I need to talk to you in private, Mike.” I came over and he said, “I want my wife Hanna to have a psychedelic experience, and would you please arrange it,” which I did. Rollo May was the sitter for Hanna Tillich at Esalen, and I could go on and on. In the early days, these most eminent, world famous characters were exploring things in ways that they didn’t have as much room to do in the academic life.

Gonnerman: And why not? Why is that not acceptable in the traditional academy?

Murphy: Well, you know what? I brought this book tonight. I have to bring this out. There are ten more copies of this in the Stanford library. This describes the psychical research that was funded by the founder’s brother, Thomas Welton Stanford. They had six rooms right across from Cubberley here in the Quad over there, and the whole map of this, and this research went on into the 1920s. Stanford was brave enough to do this. The editor of *Experiments in Psychical Research* had a curious name, J. Edgar Coover. I kid you not. And here is a nice little foreword by David Starr Jordan, who was really a nationally famous president of Stanford, vouching for psychical research at Stanford University, which has wrested from the first “the solid ground of nature. At the present stage, its methods seem more important than its results.” Now, William James taught here a few times. Psychical research was in the air. Thomas Welton Stanford left a big endowment for this. Well, this was absorbed by the psychology department here, and so psychical research is not done here, and it’s not done at Harvard, and so forth, because the whole zeitgeist, the spirit of the age, said, This is all woo-woo—telepathy, clairvoyance, etcetera. So this whole science went away. And just for the purposes of our talk tonight, I called up two authorities on this field and asked them to give me their best estimate of how many people are now doing anything related to parapsychology or psychical research in America today, and all they could think of were nine people, only five of whom are paid to do it. Now, here you had this huge thing going on here at Stanford. So field after field that relates to the greater human potential has been marginalized in modern culture in Europe and America. And this happens; cultures meander. So Esalen has provided a place where people who are interested in this can get together. So I had to bring this book.

For the last ten years, about 30 very smart folks in neuroscience, philosophy, and psychology have been meeting at Esalen to pick up where these kinds of people left off in around 1910 to 1915. And this is our attempt to form a working fellowship of academics. There are 30 or 40 of us now who are in relatively constant contact, laying out the agenda—picking it up where this left off 90 or 100 years ago, and going back to William James, Frederic Meyers, people like that. *Irreducible Mind* is its name. Now, these are folks who are all university people and eminent in their own ways, but at least there is a place. And as far as we know, this is the only place in the world that is keeping a fellowship like this alive, and we’ve been doing this for ten years and we’re going ahead in all sorts of ways we could talk about later if you’re interested. But anyway, that’s how we see ourselves: to promote these things that people want to do but are not being supported to do in mainstream institutions.

Gonnerman: It’s interesting that the quote from David Starr Jordan in the Coover book is praising the scientific method of the inquiry. Let’s talk about that a little bit because

you've been doing your own scientific inquiry into supernormal human experiences and behavior. And I have a confession to make, Father Murphy. I do not play golf...

Murphy: Good. The best advice I can give you is: You don't have to.

Gonnerman: ...but in anticipation of tonight's meeting, walking over in White Plaza on the green between the Old Union and Tresidder, I found a golf ball. Indeed I did.

Murphy: No. Where?

Gonnerman: On the grass between Old Union...

Murphy: No!

Gonnerman: I did!

Murphy: That's a small synchronicity.

Gonnerman: It is. It's wonderful, actually.

Kripal: The same thing happened to me, by the way, writing a chapter on *Golf in the Kingdom*.

Murphy: What? Did you find a golf ball?

Kripal: I was walking in my home town.

Murphy: No, you didn't.

Kripal: Yes, I swear to God. There was not a golf course within five miles, and I was thinking about writing this chapter. In fact, I was composing lines in my head, and there was a golf ball in the gutter, which I picked up and took home and wrote the chapter with. [Laughter]

Murphy: You know, I don't know whether I can believe you two guys, [Laughter] but I have to believe Charlie Tart. The first review that book ever got was by Charlie Tart, who said, "Why am I doing this?" (He and I are very fond of each other, and some of you know his work.) When he started to write the review, there was a golf ball in his living room.

Gonnerman: Well, where did that come from?

Kripal: And this is the honest-to-God truth, because he showed it to me: it was from the Stanford driving range, and he lives in Berkeley. [Laughter] And there is no way it could have gotten there.

Gonnerman: But it did. So what about *Golf in the Kingdom*? One of the really interesting things about that book, which is a classic in golf literature—it's sold more than a million copies, it's in numerous languages—is that it prompted people to write to you about their own experiences on the golf course.

Murphy: It was the first book I wrote, or tried to write, so Jeff's whole development of the idea of writing as a transmission.... Dulce Murphy, my wife, is sitting out there. She typed much of this manuscript. It just came right through me. It was not edited. It was published by Viking. It was a joyous experience writing it, and it's a tall Irish tale about

a golf pro who kind of has shamanic powers. But I had no idea when I wrote it that people on golf courses were having the experiences that people started to tell me about. So to make a long story short, I've taken confessions from several hundred, perhaps a thousand, golfers who need to tell me about their mystical experiences, to such an extent that I now know that I'm the person who discovered that golf really is a mystery school for Republicans. [Laughter]

Gonnerman: And actually, you really know that. You have empirical knowledge.

Murphy: No, I mean, for example, a guy writes to me telling me things that I'd never heard. I, at that point, had been studying all this for a long time and I was immersed. This was my life. But I had never heard somebody tell me that on a golf course, standing on a tee, he saw 400 yards away a ball marker the size of a dime. Now, there are not enough photons bouncing off that marker to get to your retina. So he told his playing partners and they thought he was nuts, and they got there and there it was. And he asked me what that would be. Then there have been lots of people who have told me about this hyper-acuity. Just to make a very long story very short, this kind of ramified out into other sports because the first month this book was out there, John Brodie, who was an All-American quarterback here at Stanford who played for the 49ers, had read this book in galleys—somebody had sent it to him—and he had been having these experiences in football, and he asked me to come to the 49er training camp and together we would explore these mysteries. I was a long-term season ticket holder, so this was an offer I couldn't refuse. So I got down there, and just to make another long story short, it was another defining experience for me. Dulce and I were out drinking beer—Dulce was the only one there with these guys—6'8". My whole instinct around such guys is to start saluting even though I'm 20 years older. [Laughter] Here are these guys talking about these experiences. One guy in particular is saying that he had these precognitive experiences during a game that were uncanny and they could see it operating on their game films. We were quite struck by this, so the next day, I went up to this guy and I said, "I really want to talk to you about those experiences." He said, "What experiences?" I said, "Well, what you told us about last night." He said, "Oh, you and Bernie got me drunk." And at that minute, I thought, What a privilege to watch repression in action. He wasn't going to own up to it, and I knew he was going to be very ambivalent about me. That's why a lot of people are ambivalent about Esalen, because with the return of the repressed, you know, there's the allure and the repulsion. And he was that way with me. We were ten days in the training camp. And that's been a recurring theme in these people talking about sports. In other words, this is an arena of transformative practice that's never been named as such, and these are athletes who have been passionately dedicated to this and yet no coach nor sportswriter ... we're going back, now, in the early seventies ... there was no term "in the zone." So, anyway, this led to a long-term exploration of, I would say, the supernormal appearing in everyday life in response either to formal practice like athletic practice or musical practice or contemplative practice, or in what I like to call covert practice—the way we practice certain things without naming a transformative practice. So *Golf in the Kingdom* started all that.

Gonnerman: And you amassed a collection of some 10,000 case studies.

Murphy: Steve Donovan is sitting out there, past president of the Esalen Institute, and he manfully kept his collection in his apartment for several years. Thanks again, Steve. Anyway, it's now housed down at UC-Santa Barbara. We collected 10,000 studies to try to document this, and it led to writing *The Future of the Body*.

Gonnerman: Before we open up to audience questions and comments, I'd like to know, What are you learning from these case studies? What does this teach us? How does this direct us toward further research or further awareness of the capacity of human beings and human nature?

Murphy: Mark, well, all sorts of things. You know, we could spend many evenings talking about this. One thing is the prevalence of this tendency to open up to what William James called "the more," and, number two, how is this filtered by our culture and by our training and by what we've learned from our parents and our teachers? Well, let's take people on golf courses who are having these uncanny experiences. They read *Golf in the Kingdom* and say, Finally I found a friend—somebody who understands this; I'm not just nutty. I could give you a lot of examples of that. In other words, we need a cultural support and framework for this emergent latent supernature that is trying to come to birth in us, and I've been oriented to all of that through Aurobindo and Spiegelberg, but never knowing it was so prevalent out there in the world and it's happening right there in front of us, let's say, during sporting events and in other venues where we see "the more" emerge, let's say, during a great athletic contest or in a great concert. Anyway, it's the relation of this latency to our cultural conditioning, but then in the study it became apparent to me that you can identify certain particular practices that are repeated in the course of time that trigger this.

So in *The Future of the Body* I outline what I call transformative modalities, and argue that all of our formal practices—let's say our various therapeutic practices and contemplative practices—are built up out of a certain number of these primal acts, I would say. We could discuss this. I've attempted to tease this out: What is it that makes for effective transformative practice? So doing a comparative study of a wide range of experiences starts to help us tune in. And another thing that became very apparent to me was that one way to organize all this material, because I consider it a form of natural history; instead of collecting rock specimens or biological specimens, we're collecting specimens or kinds of experience, and in this case, particularly out-of-the-box types of experiences—supernormal experiences. People have tried to classify these in various ways and there are various catalogues in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and so forth, but it occurred to me that the simplest way to make a taxonomy of this is simply to say that all these powers, many of which have been named in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions but which you can collect going around on golf courses, etcetera, are simply all of them extensions of attributes that each of us shares—that are universally shared—and that we've inherited from our animal ancestors.

So you can tease out all the dimensions of human nature on an evolutionary continuum this way from the animal kingdom into the ordinary human functioning into, for example, these heightened perceptions, and they come in varieties, and you can begin to see those, or let's say, heightened powers of will, which is very big in athletics. You know, one

golfer told me, “It’s as if my mind has a hand and it just puts the ball there.” Now that’s a line straight out of Coleridge—you know, the difference between imagination and fantasy. It’s amazing that a naïve guy would come up with this on a golf course. And we could go on and on and on with this. So these were some of the things that kind of emerged for me in the collection of this thing, and I think it is in the tradition of William James and the varieties of Frederic Meyers; it’s forming up a natural history of the further reaches of human nature—what James called the “more.” And I think it’s a work that began back there in the late nineteenth century and has been interrupted by the advent of behaviorism and reductive materialism, etcetera.

Kripal: Mike, in our conversations over the years, the other thing that I think has come out of all this for you is this concept of broken lineages, which is another way of saying what you just said. These sorts of experiences are universal, and people have them all the time in all sorts of cultures, but in our own cultural moment, there’s really no language and there’s really no acceptable way to talk about them. They’re considered impossible. And so this athlete just represses it. You need to get some beer in him to get it out. I think that’s really kind of where we’re at. And to go back to Esalen, I think that’s what Esalen was about: forming a language in a cultural frame where the impossible could be possible and could be talked about and embraced.

Murphy: One other interesting fact is a culture, or let’s take a sports team, can adopt the language of this and then lose it. Phil Jackson was the coach of the Bulls—they won six NBA titles and then the Lakers won nine—and he’s written about this. He’s written books and he gave Michael Jordan *Golf in the Kingdom* and *The Future of the Body*, and they talked this language apparently to a large extent on the Bulls. But other teams would just go, “Oh, my God, Jackson’s in the woo-woo department. It’s all right that he wins NBAs, but don’t give me all this BS.” So within the whole NBA, you have different.... Now, the Detroit Tigers—the owner there wanted to get everyone into TM, and for a while they had about twenty of the players into TM and it seemed to be having an effect and then it was disowned. So something can emerge and then be pushed back in because of the power of cultural homeostasis. Without homeostasis, we can’t live; our temperature has to be within a very narrow range, but culture won’t. So I look at the sixties as this huge eruption of this and then putting it back in the closet, and some of it needed to be put back in the closet, but some of the good stuff didn’t need to be. So decade by decade, you can watch this. So it’s hard for this vision of heaven and earth that I heard about in this place in 1950 to get traction ... very hard for it to get traction in a unified way.

Gonnerman: Well, you’ve done a great deal to give it traction, which is exactly what Stanford graduates are supposed to do: go out and create something new that has an impact on the larger culture, and that’s what you’ve done.

Murphy: Well, they did better on the technological front: Hewlett-Packard and Cisco and Yahoo and Google and YouTube—very good. But I don’t think Esalen has matched that production. [Laughter]

Gonnerman: Well, let's open up to questions and comments. If you have a contribution to make, please go to one of the microphones in the aisle and we'd like to have you join in.

Question from the Audience: I just finished your book, Jeff, and I really enjoyed it. And thanks, Michael, for making Esalen. The question I had concerns managing innovation. It seems to me that at Esalen it was innovation to an extreme where the wheels could almost fall off but they never quite did. And you mentioned the one rule of "no one captures the flag." But I wonder if there were any other things you could talk about as far as maintaining that level of innovation where you really were inventing something that you didn't even know what it was at the time but you kept it on track. Because during those years of the fifties and sixties there were a lot of experiences where things went way off the track, but you managed to stay there.

Murphy: That's a great question, and everyone here who's been associated with Esalen, we've really wrestled with that and we're still trying to figure it out. For me, it's first to hold the commitment to this—to not fall away from this general commitment. Secondly, it's something you have to work on on a case-by-case basis to keep bringing creative people in while at the same time you're telling certain other creative people, Don't come back. So this winnowing thing has to go on all the time. Now, in our case, we've had to survive to build up a stronger and stronger board of trustees because we're non-profit. In the early years, Dick Price, I think it's fair to say (Steve, I'm looking at you now on whether or not you agree with me)—I don't know if Dick would have sat still for a very strong board of trustees. Dick was killed in a hiking accident in 1985, and he was for us being self-reliant. But you want a board of trustees, if you're going to have this, that is really open to innovation. And then you've got to have it down through the ranks. Boy, that gets to a huge subject: to fight off the dogmas of organizational structure. For example, we had, I would say, the dogma of consensus for a long time, which meant that every single person on the property had some degree of buy-in so, at times, to make changes in the past, there have been periods when it's just like hiking through molasses. So you have to work out a healthy relationship between leadership or, let's say, some degree of hierarchy and consensus, because it can be the other way where you're not getting any feedback. I'll tell you, there's a book that I've learned something from that's called *Strategic Advantage*. It compares Route 128 outside of Boston with Silicon Valley. Have any of you read this book? Here were these two centers of innovation in high tech, and one prevailed. One shrunk and one grew: the Silicon Valley group. There are a lot of principles in there that certainly relate to Esalen about the balance between leadership and fluidity of feedback and all of this. This is still going on at Esalen. We're still working on this. It's a big problem. To be continued. There's more to say, but Esalen is still learning.

Question from the Audience: My question is about religion versus spirituality. I see that both of these terms are often used interchangeably to a lot of confusion. To me, religion is about an organized way of living. One religion says don't eat pork and another says don't use contraceptives, and so on. Instead of comparative studies of

religion, can we have comparative studies of spirituality? And instead of religion of no religion, can we have a book about the spirituality of no religion?

Kripal: I think that's a great question. I think what Frederic meant by the religion of no religion comes very close to what you're trying to express there, and it's my own feeling that the comparative study of religion inevitably leads there because when you put religions all on the same table and it's a flat, fair table, they kind of cancel each other out on all of this eat pork or don't eat pork, use a condom or don't use a condom. What you're left with at the end is the deep stuff about which you're referring to as spirituality. The way that comes into modern culture is, of course, with this phrase, "I'm spiritual but not religious." I think one of the reasons I wanted to write this book was to figure out how we got to that place. That phrase has a long history, and I think it runs through Esalen and runs through thinkers like Mike and Frederic, so I share completely the spirit of the question, and I think that is what the study of religion is, at its best.

Question from the Audience: I'd like to ask you to revisit this Spiegelberg phenomenon for a moment because that's really where you began. Using that as a case study when you were sitting up yonder, and you were awfully brief about that experience that you had, I'd like you to return to that experience, if I could, and ask you to say a few things about your experience of the relationship between the content of what he said and the form in which he said it. That may be hard for you to do.

Murphy: That is such a great question. I really appreciate that question.

Question from the Audience (continued): These are not generally reproducible phenomena in the course of a seminar, but I think it would be illustrative if you could try to make that connection between the content of what he said and the form in which he said it just from your own imagination and perhaps even a little bit of a charismatic input. I'd appreciate that. [Laughter]

Murphy: Thank you. We were being filmed backstage here, very spontaneously, and I said to Mark that this last week has evoked these memories that have just not been with me—the power of that encounter. Let me repeat what I said at the beginning. He was totally comfortable with silence, and he was totally comfortable with people's embarrassment about silence. Because when he would come out here and not say anything, you know, here we were squirming and looking. And then "Brahman" in his inflection. It was assisted by this wonderful high German accent, so that gave it a kind of panache to us naïve Americans. It was kind of a grace he had, but what was conveyed, I feel, was the very thing he was talking about when he would talk about Ramana Maharshi—that people would want to be near him just to watch him read the newspaper. That inflection! For example, he would not talk to anybody for ten or fifteen minutes before he came out on the stage; he insisted on being alone. So he would gather this silence, and in it was a vibrancy that set something off in us. Now, I'm not going to try to be Frederic, but it worked, and it was in his voice and in his manner. The thought I had was that you could see him as nothing but a performer, but here was a bunch of nineteen, twenty, twenty-one-year-old junior skeptics learning skepticism rapidly here at

Stanford. But there was something in the way he would then modulate his grand pronouncements. He had a wicked wit and he had a subtlety so that everything was suddenly given nuance and texture, and you believed him. He wasn't just thundering in a vacuum; there was the richness and the subtlety and the inflection that surrounded this very dramatic joining of, let's say, silence and.... There's the *siddhi*. You know, the Hindus talk about *siddhi*, *vac siddhi*. It's the power to convey something in a sound, and those of us who have heard a great poet who can convey it through these inflections.... That was all going on. When he would turn to, say, a line of scripture—for example, Sanskrit—he would chant that: *isa vasyam idam sarvam* (all this is for habitation by the Lord). Boy, could he chant the Vedic hymns and the Upanishads. And it worked, and those of us who heard him at some level of our being knew it worked. Anyway, those are some things I can say.

Gonnerman: And indeed it must have been effective because the lectures were then moved to Memorial Auditorium.

Murphy: Yes, I mean here he was lecturing to 200 people that first day and moved here. This has been remodeled in here, but in those days, there were 600 sitting there and then they moved it to Memorial Auditorium for 2,000, or 1,500 people, or whatever. By the way, he did not speak like we're speaking [with amplification]. He didn't have that. He had what Pavarotti had. He could fill up a hall with his voice. He was, I guess, given that. That was impressive. He didn't use a microphone and he reached everybody in the back hall. And as I said, the guy sitting in front of me threw up his clipboard. "Brahman, and his clipboard went flying.

Question from the Audience: Michael, when you speak about homeostasis and how we self-correct as a species, and as I read books like *The Tipping Point* and things you've written and look at Esalen and how the world is now, I wonder: Will we as a species ever engage in integral practice or will we just keep self-correcting and never quite move beyond that? If we're always self-correcting, how will we ever get anywhere?

Murphy: I keep saying in *The Future of the Body*, and I think people who are evolutionary theorists would agree, that evolution meanders more than it progresses. Remember, evolution is not necessarily progressive, if you read evolutionary theorists. Now remember, evolution can be used for the inanimate world. We talk about the evolution of galaxies or the evolution of animal species or the evolution of cultures. Herbert Spencer is generally given credit for being the first to extend that word to embrace these levels of existence. Just as animal species emerged out of inanimate matter, human consciousness and culture emerged out of animal life. But at all levels, most sequences that are evolutionary can be seen to be either static genesis in biology or regressive. So we look at humankind the same way: there's this meandering going on all the time. That's our condition. But, at the same time, by any criteria there are marks of progress. That's the situation we find ourselves in. So it's up for grabs, I believe, and certainly in my life. In other words, it's up to us on a day-to-day basis how we're going to push forward. I don't believe it's just automatically engineered from the start. It's up to us and it's up to this culture—American culture. It's up to us how we're going to

relate to the Middle East, how we're going to relate to Russia. Dulce and I just got back from Russia. We have really been involved in Soviet-American relations up to our ears in this, and now here's this relationship deteriorating, more than most people in here, I bet, realize the deterioration of our relationship. We have to work on this.

So the first thing is, we have to recognize the homeostasis and our tendency to go back as well as this huge potential we have for development on all fronts. So I would say, awareness first and then commitment. We can go on and on. Then you have to commit and then go for it—whatever it is that you want to push forward. I know these are big generalizations. I don't think there's a silver bullet anywhere, a magic formula. These ancient perceptions are right. I like to say that, philosophically, I'm an evolutionary panentheist—the doctrine that the divine is both transcendent and imminent to the world, the divine imminence is right here but it's also transcendent—if I want to get fancy and talk philosophically. But I'd say ethically I see myself as fundamentally an existentialist in the sense that every moment counts right now. Decisions we're making right this very instant are going to affect what happens when we walk outside and what we're going to do tomorrow. It's on a moment-by-moment basis.

One thing I find, by the way, in all this future of the body stuff is that people who feel this the most strongly are very high performers. You talk to these great athletes and boy, do they feel that life is alive and wonderful. But if you're training and if you drop your training, the rule is that if you don't train for one day, you lose three days. You hear that. It's certainly true of high-level musicians, and I've talked to a couple of surgeons who are very much into this way of seeing things. This big-time surgery when you're there eight hours: these surgeons are athletes; they have to be. One guy told me, "If I am out of shape, if I've had too much to drink..."—you never want to have surgery if somebody's been drinking the night before. [Laughter] Forgive me for going on.

Kripal: I know there are a lot of other people with questions, but just quickly, I think the other answer to that question is that human beings are not instinctually set like other animals are. We're incredibly plastic and malleable, and we use symbol systems, i.e., culture, to adapt to the environment and to adapt to different time periods. But I think because we're so adaptive, it also expresses itself as we're never really set, either. So I guess what I'm suggesting is that that feeling you express actually is our biggest asset because we're not locked into one instinctual response to a particular situation or a particular time period.

Murphy: On the good news side, there's a book on neuroplasticity, *The Brain Changing Itself*. I don't know how many of you have read this, but it's more and more learning to what degree our brain evolves over the whole course of our life. The good news is that you can really instantiate good habits that get built in. Of course, the other side is true: you really build in your bad habits into the tissue of the brain itself. And it's much more plastic. The neuroplasticity, I think, is one of the big stories right now. Practice makes perfect.

Gonnerman: And invites the graces.

Question from the Audience: It's a delight to hear you, and I want to mention another aspect that we haven't talked about, which is at Esalen (I was there from '67 to '71), the quality and the character of the people who have worked there and taught there—this incredible tapestry of people and the beauty of the place as well as the ideas—I feel that's a very important dimension of Esalen and how that has changed, developed, and shifted over the years, because there have definitely been shifts from the sixties. And another thing: the economics in the sixties were very different. You could live very well on the margin, and many of us did. So we had a freedom to experiment, and Esalen expanded that. And to continue the thread of that, in these days when it's almost like we're pricing ourselves out of our lives and out of time, I feel that's an incredibly important dimension. I just wanted to mention it.

Murphy: Boy, thank you for that. What is your name?

Comment from the Audience (continued): Jill Harris.

Murphy: Oh, Jill! Hi. You sounded familiar. Well, you know, in those days, in the sixties, I don't know what we paid for all the insurance, but it was next to nothing. But now our budget is 8 percent insurance costs—liability insurance, workman's, and so on. You add these costs up that didn't exist then. And the place was run by thirteen bachelors, none of whom had any kids, and we didn't pay anything. There's the glory of the whole thing now, but to have a stable, ongoing place like this now is very expensive to run. And in many ways right now, Esalen's future is in question because of the sheer expense of it. Can a place like that exist in this day and age without a huge amount of subsidy? And then a problem comes when you get a lot of subsidies. There are a lot of donors who get a lot of weight in what you're doing. How do you keep freedom with such donors? That's been a problem, too. It's complex.

Kripal: The other thing to say, though, to your other comment about the beauty of the place: just as a historian of religion, it's apparent to me that it's a pilgrimage spot. People have to spend a lot of energy and a lot of resources to get down there, and they go there for a very specific reason, so they're sort of setting themselves up for a transformative experience. And just the beauty and power of the physical land lends itself to that as well. You probably know John Heider. John wrote a wonderful novel imagining what Esalen would be like in Kansas [Laughter] and it didn't go very well. It's called *Living in Paradox*. It's never been published. He invented a little town called Paradox, Kansas. But it's this kind of thought experiment—how much of Esalen is tied up with the land and how much of it is tied up with the ideas, and can the two be separated? It's still a live question.

Question from the Audience: Michael, I just want to say thank you so much for having Esalen. I've been going since 1984, and I still love it. It's just a magical place where the moment I cross that gate, it's just paradise. I saw your room, and I would love to stay there. I just want to ask you: the last time I was there, I met a young lady who works at Google. The first time I went there, I didn't tell my boss at Procter and Gamble that I

went there because it was such a conservative company that if I said I was going there, they would probably say, Oh, what a nut case. But this young lady who is probably in her thirties said, “I told Google that they should have a pick-up stop for the Google bus there every month.” She was going there every month and it was totally OK with Google. I’m lucky that I have my own business. I’m a keynote speaker, and I told a company today that I do improv and I go to Esalen and they loved that. So, congratulations.

Murphy: Where do you work?

Audience (continued): I have my own company. My name is K.C. Chan-Herur, and my Web site is Innovation Passion.com—a little commercial. What I want to ask you is: have you found in your research and in your conversations throughout the world, is that an experience that’s happening or is that mostly a West Coast U.S. experience—the acceptance that it’s totally normal. My bias is that it’s totally wonderful.

Murphy: This is a great question. First of all, people come to Esalen from all over the world. We estimate that generally about a quarter of the people on the property are from other countries. They’ve been from more than 100 countries there. There are days at Esalen where the whole table is talking German and this one’s talking Portuguese from Brazil, Japanese, etcetera. But this is great news about Google. [Laughter] The founders were Stanford guys, too, you know, and one is a Russian. We love Russians. There are definitely corporate cultures, there’s no doubt about it. But you might be interested to know that the Sixth Army had its entire officer corps come to Esalen for a week. They wore bathing suits to the baths [Laughter]. American Airlines for years had all of their vice presidents and all their corporate officers come, so we’ve had quite a lot of relationships with different corporations, but I can tell you also that it’s just like with Spiegelberg here. Stanford has been great at supporting innovation here and protecting Spiegelberg and all, but there were departments here at Stanford that wanted to get rid of Spiegelberg, and there have been places in America that don’t like their professors coming to Esalen, so it’s a mixed bag. People sneak out anyway and just come and sneak back, and we go our subversive way. I appreciate your remark very much. That’s the way it is.

Question from the Audience: Have you thought that many of the interesting things you’re talking about grow out of the human capacity to have dreams?

Murphy: Amen, amen. Dreams are crucial.

Kripal: The other thing to say here is the whole category of synchronicity, this linking of the external world and the internal world: dreams are very much a part of that—people taking something inside them and making it real outside them.

Question from the Audience: It seems to me that in a university context such as Stanford’s, the overwhelming majority of students are seeking knowledge and not necessarily meaning, and that at least in my own generation, I’ve seen many people

graduate and go into the real world and kind of slam into what writers call this quarter-life crisis. What is my identity in this place? And that that's when the search for meaning and identity and this integration you speak of really begins, but you're now outside of that university context. So I'd be curious if you could talk about how you initiate that discussion with people who need to find these things in a very disparate place—in the workplace—and how you make that relevant for a generation that doesn't find this kind of activity necessarily natural for themselves.

Murphy: These are wonderful comments and questions. I'd like to get your response to that, Jeff, because you work within academia. At Esalen, our ethic—Dick Price and I shared this very strongly—is that we're in the outlaw country, and yet have so much of the leadership coming from mainstream culture to do things that they usually couldn't do back home. So we create and serve by staying outside but also, I would say, not proselytizing. In other words, some of you remember an organization, EST—Werner Erhard. That was a different approach. He was out proselytizing and going into organizations. The way we saw our influence was to radiate out and attract people who wanted to do it. Some of our activities, however, gave birth to projects that then went into mainstream activities in an organized way. For example, something called Confluent Education—the joining of affective education, the education of emotions and the body and so forth with the intellect—got started at Esalen with Ford Foundation grants in 1967-68 and then moved to UC-Santa Barbara and became a department and has produced about 500 graduate degrees and spread to about 22 counties. Now, it's another version of education of the whole person. That particular influx into education left Esalen and went out. Now, I'd say the same thing with our citizen diplomacy work. We worked with the Soviet Union to bring many of the ideas and the principles that we were exploring at Esalen. Joe Montville, who is a career foreign service officer, invented the term “track two diplomacy,” which you can read about in the *New York Times*. He invented it at the big house at Esalen and wrote a famous article, “Foreign Policy According to Freud” in *Foreign Policy* magazine, and has flown high cover for us for 27 years now. He took great inspiration (right, Joe?) from Joan and Erik Erikson, who were our friends, and various other people who were central to Esalen to bring this into this so-called track two citizen diplomacy to reach out to Russians during the cold war. And now a field of activity has arisen with symposia and meetings and seminars and so forth, so I would say Esalen then radiated out into the culture. I don't know if I'm answering your question. I can't see where you went.

Gonnerman: He walked out. [Laughter]

Murphy: He walked out?

Gonnerman: There he is. Jeff, do you want to bring him back in?

Kripal: I honestly heard your question very differently. I heard you saying that your education failed you—that it was driven by professional or financial concerns primarily and that you saw it like many young people, and certainly virtually all parents see it, as an investment to get a certain return at the end, and I think that's a tragedy. I think that's

the absolute wrong way to approach a fine liberal arts education. But this is a problem we deal with constantly in universities now. The kids come to us at eighteen, and the first thing they think is that what they major in is what they're going to be doing for the rest of their life, which is complete nonsense. So I think what those four years are about, again, is an initiation. It's a liminal period in your life which you will never get again, and young people are tragically led down this line that it's a way to make a lot of money at the end. And I understand those are real concerns, but I don't think that's what a truly great education is about. I think it's about meaning, and I think it's a kind of vision quest, and I think that's how a university actually is set up. It forces you to study all kinds of things and it rearranges your world. That would be my response to it. But a lot of that depends on you, of course—what you choose to major in, what you choose to do with it—and we don't force people to do anything. It's up to them.

Question from the Audience: I just want to thank you, all three of you, for doing everything that you've done to get to this place tonight. Thank you.

[Applause]

Gonnerman: A lot of people don't know about the Center for Theory and Research, and you two are off to one of CTR's meetings with a group on evolutionary metaphysics. Perhaps we could talk a little bit about that and any other concluding remarks you might want to make.

Kripal: Mike and I run a number of symposia series out of CTR. This is kind of at the gut of it. It's an attempt to go back, really, to Mike's original vision with Aurobindo and look at evolution certainly as a biological process but also as a cultural and perhaps even an occult or a mystical process. We're trying to gather what we think are top-notch philosophers and intellectuals from around the country and encourage them to actually do this—to actually think big and write big and introduce these huge ideas back into the culture in a way that can get traction, as Mike said earlier.

Gonnerman: Mike, do you have any concluding observations? More memories that have come back in the course of our conversation?

Murphy: First, this has been a wonderful audience. I want to thank you, Mark, very much for recreating Spiegelberg for me. I really appreciate that. It's been a real reminder that however green this whole enterprise is, it ain't goin' away, and we're going to go forward and we're still learning. For me, the sense of the difficulties is as keen as ever, but there's also the sense of how evergreen this is and how much opportunity there is on so many fronts. So it seems that this thing with Spiegelberg happened yesterday. It's like I reincarnated and didn't have to die. It's just here. I guess that's my main take-away.

Gonnerman: Thank you both very much, and thank you to the audience. Good night.
[Applause]

Michael Murphy is Chairman of the Board and Director of the Center for Theory & Research at Esalen Institute. During his forty-year involvement in the human potential movement, he and his work have been profiled in *The New Yorker* and featured in many magazines and journals worldwide. After graduating from Stanford in 1952, he did graduate work in philosophy, practiced meditation at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in South India, and co-founded Esalen with Stanford graduate Richard Price in 1962. He is author of *The Future of the Body*; *The Life We Are Given* (with George Leonard); *In the Zone: Transcendent Experience in Sports* (with Rhea White); *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation* (with Steven Donovan); *God and The Evolving Universe* (with James Redfield and Sylvia Timbers); and four novels: *Golf in the Kingdom*; *The Kingdom of Shivas Irons*; *Jacob Atabet*; and *An End to Ordinary History*.

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Comments?

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